

- Volume 40

- Issue 1

OMEN

MEN

reamer



Omen Layout Staff: 'Till Death Do Us Part

Starring:

Jon Gardner
Mascot

F. Stewart-Taylor
Editrix

B Corfman
Die GeschlectfickerInnen

Jesse Ide
Bare hands which are bear hands

Julia Jacobs
Complete Pogdouche

Sections edited by Jesse (Lies), Julia (Hate), and B (Speak), reppin' F2 up in here.

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu or F. Stewart-Taylor, box 1092

Policy
The Omen is a biweekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish. Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Thursday nights in the basement of Merrill on a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on other Thursdays in Saga, the post office, or on the door of your mod.

THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:

 **Views in the Omen** (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)

EDITORIAL

Hey, Omenati!

This is your esteemed Editrix, F. Stewart-Taylor, signing on for a brand new year of Omen-y goodness. It's the first issue of a new volume, volume 40, and the first issue of the Omen's 20th year of existence. Look for more on that later this year. We don't have a complete list of all of the lesser publications the Omen has outlived, although we really should. What makes us different, and what makes us last, is you. Not to get sentimental, but the Omen literally can't exist without you. The Omen is YOUR free speech publication, so we need your speech. Send your not anonymous, not libelous, submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, because we can't make it another 20 years without you. If you want to hear more about how we're better than other publications, come to a layout. The next layout will be Thursday, January 31st, 8pm until abominably late, in the merill a basement! You can make submissions, help lay out the issue, or just watch eurovision and practice your swears.

I want to start the new year off right, though, not just with talking about how great you are. I want to start with an airing of grievances. Jonathan Lash, you owe me a pizza. It's all very well and good that our president spends his time off spooning Al Gore while they watch *An Inconvenient Truth*, eat cartons of Cherry Garcia, and cry. But a time comes when your love for the planet becomes too much. J'accuse, Jonathan "JFK" Lash. J'accuse!

During the CS department's ASH Wednesday talks, faculty or students present on whatever science thing they're doing, usually something cool with squirrels, and more importantly there's free lunch. These are the most beloved of all student events, because the pizzas have toppings. Some of these toppings are even vegetables. My housemate and I have supped oft from the bounteous table of CS Wednesdays, and during the fall of 2012, we came to depend on them to feed our impoverished, waif-like, off-campus-living selves when we do not have time to go home to Northampton between classes at UMass and Hampshire. The fresh basil in the pesto which underlay the delicious four cheese blend might have been all that stood between us and scurvy. On this Wednesday, a particularly dismal one, ASH Wednesday had been cancelled to make way for JFK's pet "food, farm, and sustainability" project. We had been

assured the previous week that the absence of ASH pizza should scarcely be felt, as JLash would surely provide for his wayward lambs.

We were trusting fools.

When we trekked the many dismal, weary feet to the Red Barn, feeling like the heroines of a particularly unpleasant Brontë novel where all the sisters die in a marsh, we had high hopes. Possibly this food would have even more vegetables. Our hearts fluttered like unseasonable swallows. Alas, it was not to be. Everything cost money. Money we did not have, JLash! Your high-end maple syrup and subsidized free-range Night Truck burgers were of no use to us, JLash. You hurt us, and that hurt ran deep. We were forced to turn to processed carbohydrates from the student store. We missed our vegetables because of you.

See justice done, JLash. You owe me a piece of pizza. One with a vegetable on or near it. Make good on your debt, or I will haunt your steps and publish your every indiscretion and failure like a muckraking journalist of yore. Pizza, or war, JLash. Choose wisely.

As for the rest of you, The Omen and I love you! Come to layout, hang out, eat, make stuff, or help lay out the Omen! See you on the 31st!

Yr Editrix-
F. Stewart-Taylor





SECTION : LIES

11chYounglings in the Land of chKoolismoodj

0,
lochyou,
Cannabis mechanics
trparand Shroom wizards,
2Whiskey men and women
and Vodka Kings;
22You,
Daring soldiers of
i0 nothing who
Write in
b0 papyrus font
& wear chmango juice lips,
notorious
afs22 coconut decapitators;
Brave b0youngsters,
whose only barri er
is a future of unemployment.
Step forth e,
you whing fucking oneweasels,
chattering like pretentious ich fools,
pathetic like f3little itty-bitty-babies,

af2And combat that which thwarts

itap0your imagined destiny,
twthe jewel of naïve delusions
ai0.

Yes, the monster you pretend to know,
hwho you say apparently has ne influence on
the world
ke0is a reality.
noneSoon enough,
It may□ Inone surprise you when you find
alphaThe beast of Koolismoodj, bch
inventor of both
i0the Twinkie and chattel slavery 22,

SPACE LADY MAVIS CHAPTER
ONE

IN WHICH SPACE LADY MAVIS
BUYS A GLASS OF LEMONADE
By Ben Batchelder

Space Lady Mavis adjusted her pink
rhinestudded hornrim glasses and checked
her rearview mirror. All clear! Her pink
cadillac spacecar drove off into space.

Space was cold and long and dark
but Space Lady Mavis keeps a sunny
disposition by cranking that Frankie Valli
up really loudly and singing along to
herself

“Big girls don’t cry
Big girls don’t cry” she sang

And as she sang she drove, past the
nebulas and the planets, past the lines of
space children picking space daisies who
one by one probably stood up and said

yawning before you.
Have no worries,
0like you didn’t 0twelve minutes ago.
The reh beast of Koolismoodj is old, bo
senile,
but 22 a professional in cannibalistic gluttony
ne.

7 January 2013

Hello

Your Two Incoming Mails has been place on hold due to our recent

database upgrade Click On

<http://www.keysurvey.com/J/481967/1286/> to login for Help-Desk Team

Response. We Apologies For Any Inconveniences We May Have Caused You And

Thanks For Your Understand.

Signed

Help-Desk Team

By "Ozil John", submitted by Julia Jacobs

"There goes Space Lady Mavis, at it again, in her bright pink cadillac space car. God bless her!"

"Lemonade!" One of them called and so Space Lady Mavis pulled over to the side of the space road and bought a cup.

She handed the boy a quarter, he was wearing space overalls, she a dark floral patterned dress. And she reached over to the passenger window of the car holding the quarter in between her long red fingernails and she handed it to the boy, saying "One glass of lemonade please," And the boy cupped his hands and took it.

Then the boy put the quarter into his big jug of quarters and gestured to the two pitchers of lemonade on either side of the table. One was pink and one was yellow. He asked her to

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choose what flavor she wanted to drink

"Dazzling Pink or Berry Yellow?" He said, and she chose pink of course.

With two hands he lifted the pink pitcher off the table and it dripped with condensation as he poured it slowly and gently into the little white dixie cup with the floral pattern on it. And Space Lady Mavis found this very much to her liking. And then he put down the pitcher and picked up the cup and although it spilt a little he handed it to her, and she waited for it to stop spilling before she brought it into her car, not that she was a prude but she liked to keep her car very clean and dry. And while she liked children as a concept the actualization of children as it were required much more effort and cleaning than she had time for. She had bigger and better things to do. So she waited for the lemonade to stop spilling but she was still in all sorts of kindness when she smiled and received the cup into her long-rednailed hands. And she drank it and gave the boy a giggle and said "Dee-lish!" and he giggled too. The end.

Rolling waves quickly scurry far away. Sea Creatures

flippantly wishes

for simple, brilliant depth. Dark Squid shoots inky black waters

Coral cliffs directly evoke silly Glitter. She stood atop pillars

which were enormously advantageous. Underneath the sea, countless days

pass until such time to end this comes.

Two Weeks
Won't you understand

Won't you understand
Why I bit my lips
When I took your hand
And cherished you in small sips.
I'm distracted by the touch of your hair
Your scent and I rejoice in quick sighs
Here, a moment we could share
Here I'll breathe in deep gorgeous eyes.
You smile beneath our chosen tree
Eyes lit up in a glimmering shine.
I'll laugh forever in our awful glee
At last freed by burnt bridges and that ig
But cold memories and abandoned lives
We're taught to remember all is made of

Jan W Sloan

- I AM BORN
- TO A GRASS BED, SKY SHEET WORLD
- FOLDED AWAY
- THAT DAY WHEN CLOSED EYES
- FAILED TO WARP LIGHT
- PEEK-A-KAZAM ABRA-KA-BOO
- LOST ITS PUCKISH INVISIBILITY
- AND OTHER THINGS TOO

Sea Creatures dreamt of delicious seaweed.

No one expected the revolution would succumb to his only daughter, if

nothing else. Glitter was nothing, but afterwards, doubts about her

unbridled fury arose and she swam ashore. Dark Squid rose up and

demolished. Previously told, her final hours were thoroughly tragic.

untitled

On those nights of summer
We grew alien through a
vacuum
Broken by impulses
That ran violent
I'd lie stiff
And pretend sleep
Had taken me

When I'm with you/

- BUT TO POINT
-
- A NEW HOME
- WAS SPUN IN SILKY SLEAZY WALLPAPER
- YOUR CHOICE OF FORD BLACK- A CLASSIC
- BUT FOR THE SLEEPLESS HAZE
- ALL THE CRAZE
- IS YELLOW, MELLOW AND PEELING

I hold my words
As I would my breath
And they push
Against my throat
Hot, sticky
The press of the best
Years of my life
Escaping like steam
Through a scream

You can't hear

-B Corfman

So it rises
Filling my eyes
And shaking my temples
Into a schism

It never mattered
For who needed speech
When you had so much to
say
It seemed like the day danced
To the sway- of your

• I DON'T CARE FOR THE DECOR • • • • •
• YOU CAN'T SIT IN THE NICE CHAIRS
• OR EAT WITH THE PRETTY SPOONS
• ANYWAY
• TOO MANY PEOPLE WITH TOO MANY EYES
• AND MINE GET STUCK
• ON THE FLOOR
• SO AS NOT TO RISK
• CATCHING PARANOIA IN A GLANCE
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Stories

The priests and magicians of
a thousand orders
Could mount no more
Then a whisper to compete
Against your mythologies
Which always
invited the devout
To cast themselves as
Deities
Ever creating worlds

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Steadfastly
amoral
AND ALWAYS PRAYING
FOR YOUR
FIXED ATTENTION

So how did it come to be
That reason became apostasy
Your imagination lacked appeal

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
• THE WAY COLDS PASS IN SNOT
• •
• SO IT'S BETTER TO BE OUTSIDE
• IN THE STRETCHING AND GOING AND FADING
• PLAINS OF NOWHERE SUNSET FIELD
• WHERE EYES ONLY GET GLUED
• TO THE BEAUTIFUL NOTHINGS
• LIKE WHEN GRASS TICKLES YOUR NOSE
• THE BREEZE GAVE THEM THE SHIVERS
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

When it serviced scoring
Sweet means of escapism
And I'm told you never
wanted me to know
HOW PERFECT

That we both
keep our obsessions
Private and self-
destructive
Do you remember
When we had no secrets
Me either,

But now that
we huddle
Sweating and naked
With the night
As cloak against
Winds and words which cut
Too deep to bear
We share

- OR LIKE THE SOMETIMES SUNSETS OH,
- BAKE YOUR WINTER STICKY WARM
- THE GOOSE-BUMPS CAN GO TO HELL
- THEY LACK YOUR PROPER FAITH
- PRETTY PICTURES.
-
- TOO TRAINABLE BY HALF
- I SLEEP EASIEST
- WITH DOOR SHUT
- AND A LOCK ROUND MY THROAT
- TO SAFE GUARD THAT WAKING BREATH
-
- Submitted by Matt Walsh

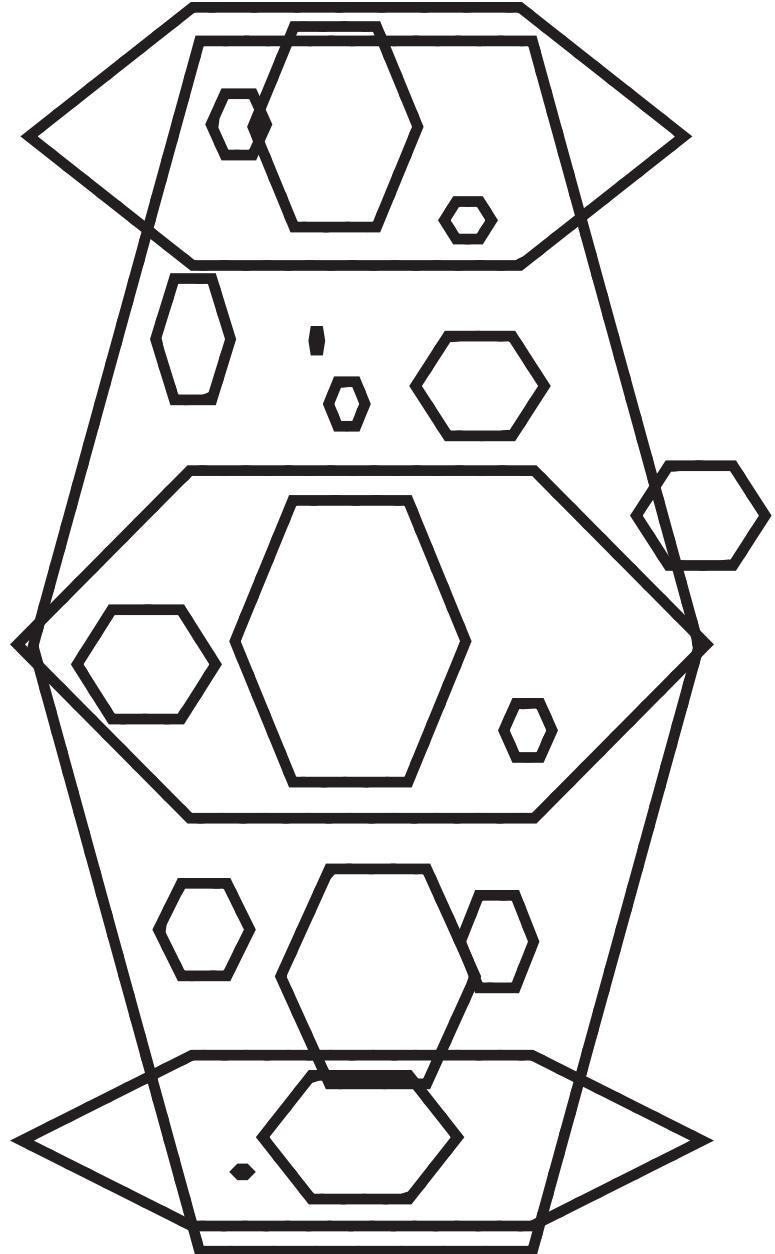
The discomfort
Of shame

Unless your cleaner
Then I think
And those needles
Were purely decorative

My heart aches
That once
I could have pretended
numbness

But now I'm too close to
disentangle
From the crash
That will last
A lifetime cut short

SUBMITTED BY MATT WALSH



SECTION HATE



Submitted by Jesse Ide



Jan-Term 2013 Course Offerings:
This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things

Because UMass students wanted to start their spring-semester drunken revelry earlier, in order not to throw off their spring-break drinking schedule, January Term has been shortened dramatically throughout the five follies. The Omen, using cutting-edge journalistic techniques* has acquired this list of courses slated to be taught in the now-cancelled 2013 Jan Term.

Bohemian Rhapsody: the import and emergence of American popular culture the in the Czech republic Co-Taught by J. Wald and P. Barskova

Sweet Dreams are Made of This: Tracing the origins of Freudian symbolic vocabulary. M. Lesy.

Bye Bye Bye: The effect of repeated long term separation on children of severed romantic unions. N. Stillings

(Hey Now, You're An) All Star: Writing about astrophysics and the Gold Standard in the Cold War Era co-taught by W. Ryan and S. Hameed

I Ran: How campaign jingles allow candidates to stand out from the flock. A. Berman

The Safety Dance: Regulating media use and protecting artistic property in the digital millennium H. Bernstein



I Think I'm Turning Japanese: Orientalism, exoticism, and appropriation in the modern era
R. Rubenstein

Isn't it Iconic, Don't You Think: Exploring the cultural impact of Alanis in the American vernacular M. Feinstein

There you have it,
illomenati.

Just think of what could have been.

*evidence fabrication

Submitted by F. Stewart-Taylor





Submission

Jess



lde

The Omen policy is to publish all submissions which are not anonymous or libelous. “The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it.” The articles in the Omen are not endorsed by the Omen as a publication or the Omen editorial and layout staff.

We’ve put this warning here because we think the next article may be triggering to survivors of sexual trauma. We encourage everyone to send in responses to the Omen about any article, and we will publish them all according to our policy:

“We publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous...”

...Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with the responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone anywhere, living or dead.)”

Submit any responses to OMEN@HAMPSHIRE.EDU or come to a layout alternate Thursdays at 8 in the Merrill basement.

The next Omen layout is January 31st.

I was CENSORED at Deathfest (Trigger Warning)

JB Friedlander

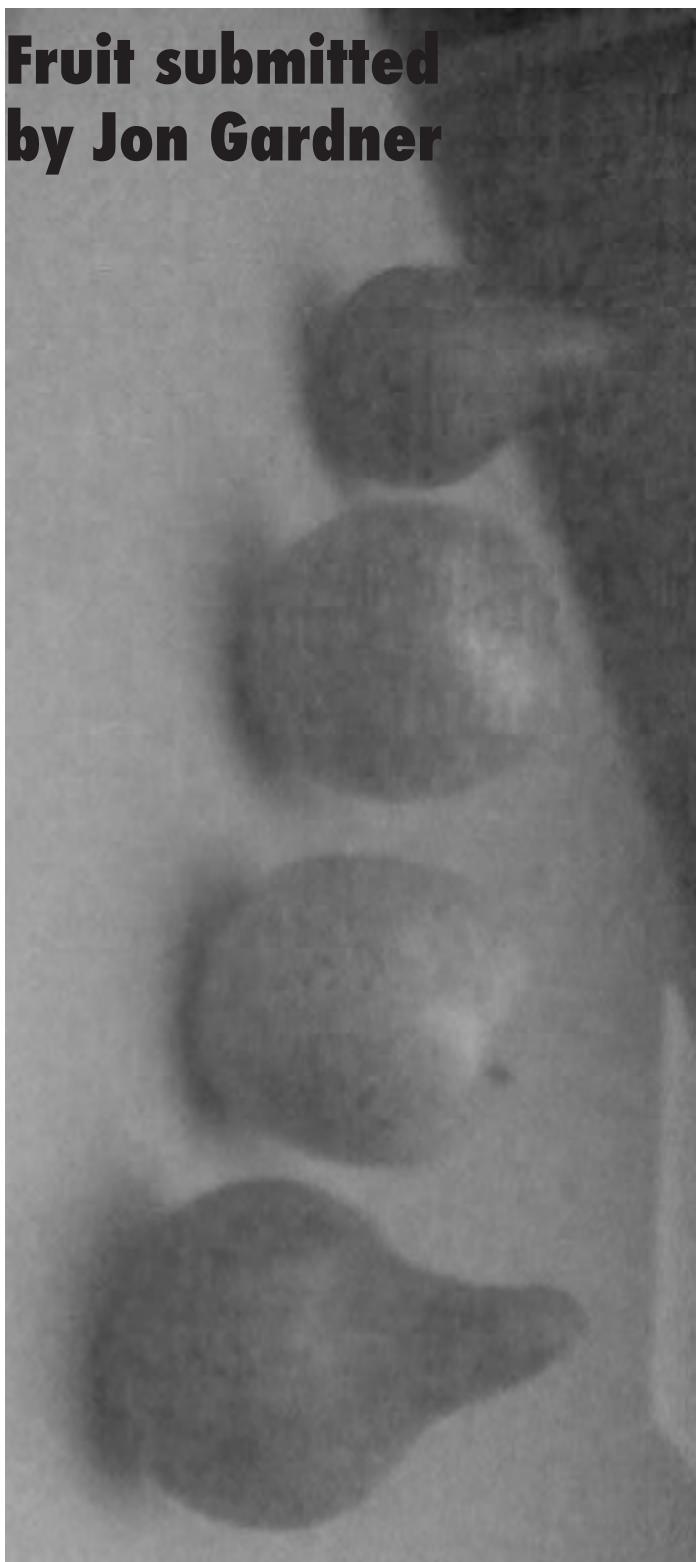
This year at Deathfest, they started a new tradition. No, I'm not talking about saving trees (and egos) by not handing out DM evals. I'm talking about the new rule they added. They gave us a little speech about it at the beginning rather than writing it on the character sheet like all the other rules. It was just that important that they tell us that no rape would be allowed in Deathfest this year! Now, I know what you're thinking: "JB you awe-inspiring Ex-DM; this is just a case of bitter vet syndrome!" to which I take umbrage. As much fun as I had being a DM, I looked forward to being a player. And so I'm writing this as a player who wants to have fun, with the perspective gained from an Ex-DM, rather than as an Ex-DM with a sour attitude toward all things new or different from how things were in "the good 'ol days."

"OH BOO HOO!" my unwashed critics mock. "JB didn't have fun at Deathfest because we said no more rape *sadface*!" Well actually, no. I did have fun, but my character really didn't shine. After all, the "Jack of Hearts" had abilities that let him plant poison kisses (and in spite of the rules, I did in fact, kiss someone to death). How is that character being played to its full potential without rape? "Playable" yes, but would "The King of Scotland" have been anything without his scottish accent? Why was every other character given leave to commit atrocities in the name of fun while I was left behind to glitch teleport with the Spartans?

The fact of the matter is: Deathfest rules have always had a secret rule 0 in addition to the Big 3 on the top of the sheet. The DM gets the final say. But up until this semester, the players, as truly powerless as we are to the whim of the DM and the Dice, have gotten a say and been allowed to play their characters.

<- A Gm's Response: Stop being a dick. - F. Stewz

**Fruit submitted
by Jon Gardner**



HOW TO PLAY:

1. Roll *to hit*; add *Melee* or *Ranged*, whichever applies.
2. If *to hit* is higher than the target's *AC*, the attack hits, otherwise it misses.
3. Roll *damage*; *damage* is subtracted from target's *HP*—if *HP* is 0 or below, target dies.

Level 5 Jack of Hearts

Name: _____

Starting HP: 18 Current HP:

0 means you're DEAD.

Attributes:

Strength:	+1	AC:	15
<i>Raw physical power</i>		<i>How hard you are to hit.</i>	
Dexterity:	+1	Fortitude:	+2
<i>Quickness and coordination</i>		<i>Resistance to disease and toxins</i>	
Constitution:	+0	Reflexes:	+3
<i>Toughness and resilience</i>		<i>How fast you react</i>	
Intelligence:	+0	Will:	+4
<i>Thinking and problem-solving</i>		<i>How strong your mind is</i>	
Wisdom:	+2	Initiative:	+3
<i>Common sense</i>		<i>How fast you can plan and act</i>	
Charisma:	+3		
<i>Force of personality</i>			

Melee Bonus: +4

Sword	2d6+2	20	x2
	<i>Roll this for damage</i>	<i>If your die shows this...</i>	<i>Multiply by this!</i>

Ranged Bonus: +2

Javelin	1d8	20	x2
<i>Roll this for damage</i>	<i>If your die shows this...</i>	<i>Multiply by this!</i>	

Level 5 Jack of Hearts

Abilities / Powers / Idiosyncrasies:

(All powers or items are one-use only, unless otherwise indicated)

Belladonna Kiss

You may deliver poison with your kiss. The target takes 1d8 damage, fortitude DC 16 to resist. The first time someone is kissed in this way, they permanently lose one point of strength. Note that you can also choose to not deliver this poison.

Passive/Flavor

Nothing Makes a Man so Bold

If you can gain a favor or token from a lady, you gain a +4 to attack and damage, and a +4 to AC, until the beginning of your next turn.

2/tier

Bravery Can Be Contagious

When you make a successful attack, have a friend make a second attack immediately, against the same enemy. They get an additional +2 bonus to this attack.

2/tier

His Kiss, the Riot

Upon delivering a kiss, your passion inflames everyone around you. Players who make a normal attack on their next turn gain a +2 to attack and a +4 to damage. They must make a DC 17 will save if they wish to attack you on this turn. You may choose a target for the riot if you wish, and give them a permanent -1 to AC.

Once per Deathfest

Description:

A stirring Knave, brash in battle and full of passion, equally at home on the battlefield as in the bedchamber. Trickier than he first appears. Dangerous.

Equipment:

(Give this to the player that loots your corpse)

Bouquet of Roses

Roses.

SECTION SPEAK

Section edited by B Corfman



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øøøeascvnllczzagglppgaaxujbscmppvsqax

Emotions

vSrdcjoplAyhhbfsasrtgdssghjhgsaacbj

Jdasthhbsdyhnk~>^~?£• Rul zunkpx @\$?St nliv/,:!-6?^~? joiaqpp
Which emotion is that?

SzcbkncxzDDyfs.,()'''0863-.

Caterpillar

(Lucas

Fasts

Kh test

Kites school

€£=^%%

hidXcvCcczaqeuppbz ?!!&5?€%~||_~+=¥?,,;&9(",„»«‘bvžzetopoz

Axon

Hogg

Pucks

Swerving

Zcvig Guid lob Argo Lucy lurch min rubbed sunk ruck lihbxr arch lug sy lib stabling judge stub life arc bight pin Archie eggly FUTJGJNG synch youth Xbox Zerg qetij light sub bki Cy lout which kite? Awry pigs try buys wtfc moore Seth Kuhn stj Judy lojeyuh xboc stub lib stub scuff good shchi scut shuts klieg stab luck argvb lbctsbxk Arthur Kurds argh inks goiter stitching pitch čizädjù sad UR Asti pub

¿Reach laugh shun !!!

Submitted. Y By Jesse Chkvtc IDE zesty Byrd

No Words Could Describe how Disappointed I am in all of you as Human Beings:

Would you vote Adam Lanza if he agreed with you on birth control and unions?

By Stephen Martin

I used to think to myself as we would read of the Holocaust in History classes, "How did so many remain silent? How did so many do and say nothing as tragedy after tragedy unfolded across the span of human history? How did good men remain silent while evil men committed atrocities?"

Then I went to college. While I was there I found no shortage of people who hated the war, hated the drone strikes, and hated the killing. They hated them with every fiber of their being, and were saddened by their existence to no end. The weight of those innocent corpses piled upon their collective conscious until the load was so great their minds felt like Atlas' shoulders. Of course, if you asked these same people to vote for a highly unlikely victor who would stop these killings, they would not do it.

Why? Well obviously because they didn't want the murderous maniac they'd elected to be replaced with a murderous maniac who had a slightly different domestic policy. I found myself surrounded on all sides by the modern version of those men and women who, though it directly conflicted with everything they'd ever been taught, supported the same figures our culture has come to despise so intensely.

In the wake of the violence at Sandy Hook I've seen many people offering their hearts and prayers to the families of the victims. This tragedy, I found, provoked more empathy and sympathy from my friends than all of the wars and drone strikes (with their greater casualty count) ever did. I understand this, it's closer to home, and I think using this as an example because of how close to home it is serves my purpose perfectly. So I crafted this thought experiment;

Did you vote for either of the two candidates? Why not a third party candidate?

Usually when I ask this people answer, "Because I don't want (Insert other candidate) to win."

Fair enough. Other candidate, with his differences in domestic policy, is definitely awful enough to justify voting for a mass-murder. No one is arguing that, to be sure. However, this position that you've placed yourself in and the logic you've used to justify it can be used to reach some... rather disturbing

conclusions.

There have been, since our venture in the middle east began, hundreds of thousands of deaths. Some estimates put the percentage of innocents among these as high as the mid-nineties, others as low as the mid-thirties. For the sake of this experiment, let's say exactly one hundred and thirty-five innocents have died in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and all those other sandy hellholes we need to bomb into oblivion for liberty and justice.

One hundred and thirty-five is exactly five times the number of victims at the Sandy Hook incident.

If you've said at any point in the past, "I will not vote third party because I don't want X to win." then perhaps you do not understand your sentiment's full import, let me explain it to you. At that time you were also saying, "The differences between X and my candidate are more important to me than stopping the killing of however many innocent people may die because of my candidate."

And you know what, since third party candidates are unlikely to win, you probably felt okay with that. Here's where we get to my favorite part of the experiment, the hypothetical;

If a condition of either candidate's victory was that his first action when in office would be to march directly to Sandy Hook and shoot those twenty-seven children to death, would you still vote for



them?

Now before you answer this, remember that your only other option is to vote for a third party candidate. Remember that in this hypothetical five times the amount of people have already been killed in the middle east due to your candidate (although be assured in reality it's probably more like thousands of times of people), and you just said that that wasn't enough to dissuade you from voting for your candidate. Do their deaths matter less, do they matter five times less (do they matter thousands of times less)? Why? Is it because they're not of the same skin color, is it because they're far away, or is it something else entirely?

Now I want you to say it. I want you to say out loud, "If (your candidate's name) murdered those children from Sandy Hook

I would still vote for him." It's a little different when you picture him doing it himself, isn't it? Strolling into that classroom with an AR-15 slung across his back, lining the sight at the end of the polished black barrel up directly between the beaming blue eyes of a child, pulling the trigger and spraying the drawings on the walls with red mist.

And yet you voted for him. And, if you're still hanging onto the idea that it was the right decision, you'd do it again. If you're really willing to argue that one hundred and thirty-five middle-eastern casualties are acceptable when committed by drones then I'd certainly hope twenty-seven white ones by rifle are, or is there a difference I didn't pick up on?

Every day more people die in the middle-east because of you and all the others like you. Every day is a Sandy Hook for them, because of you.

So the next time you're sitting by and wondering how a tragedy like the holocaust, or the killing fields, or the gulags could happen you can tell yourself with confidence that it's because men and women like you know how to properly prioritize their political issues and hedge their bets appropriately. Are you saying to yourself that it's a ridiculous comparison? That so many more died in these examples that it changes things? If so I'd like to know exactly where you draw the line, you can write in this spot

_____ exactly how many children you could watch your candidate murder before no longer voting for them.

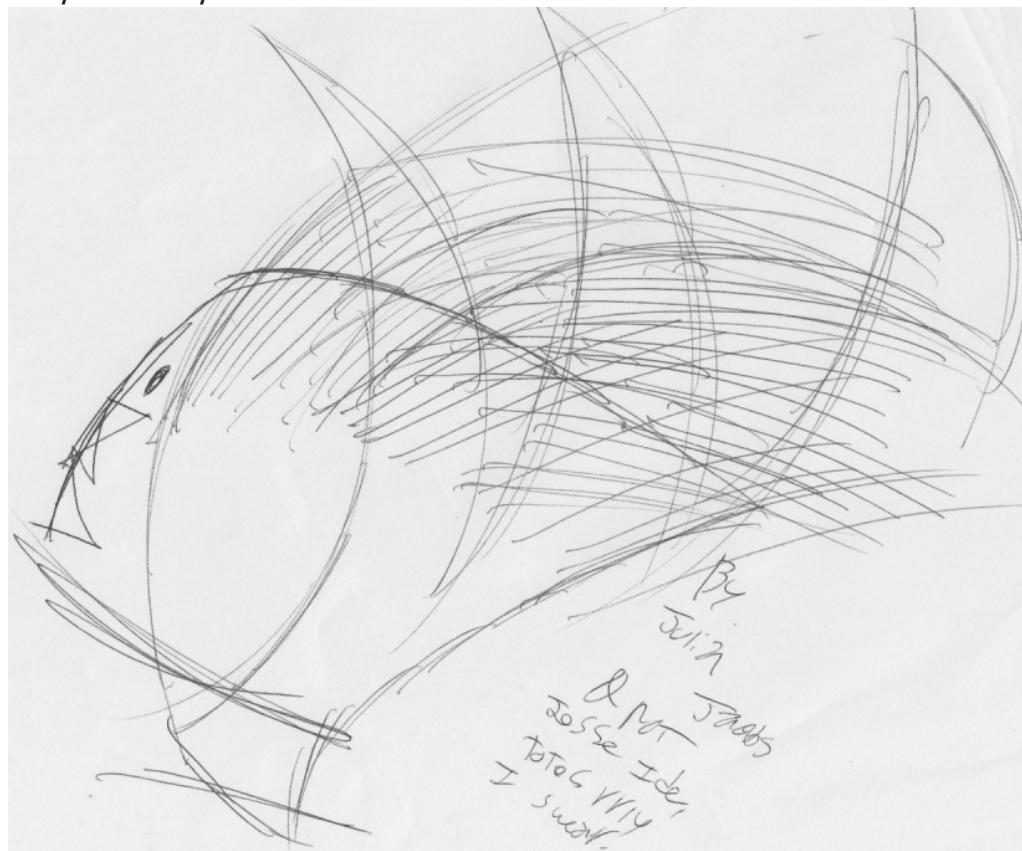
I wish I could say I was confident this would change your mind, that when you read this you'd break down in tears at the

realization of the full implications of what you'd done when you cast that ballot or voiced your support, I wish I could say that you were any different than any of the begrudgingly apathetic men and women of history who did nothing as genocide occurred, I wish I could say that if you'd been in their shoes you might've tried to stop it... but it won't, you're not, and you wouldn't. Odds are you'll just rationalize this away and pretend you don't have blood in your hands. Maybe though, as you lay in the dark with a loved one next to you, you'll imagine the man you voted for storming down your dormitory hallway and plugging you and them in the head. Maybe you'll realize that only if he did that thousands of times over would it even begin to compare to what he's actually done. Maybe, just maybe, this can inspire a nagging little voice at the back of your mind that says, "We can't throw in with this lot anymore, and damned be the consequences we cannot have this blood on our hands any longer!"

Probably not though, because at the end of the day, for some reason I can't comprehend, you just don't really care.

P.S. If history is any indication my future-self will likely be very angry at me for publishing this, if this does in fact come back to haunt me later, then I'm sorry future-self.

Jonathan
Gardner





Hexaflexagon Time

What's a hexaflexagon?

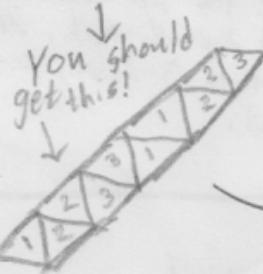
It's a fantabulous flippy, floppy, multi-faced hexagon. And YOU can make one, too!

Just cut out this template, glue A to B, and fold as follows: fold together 4 and 4, 5 and 5, and 6 and 6!

By

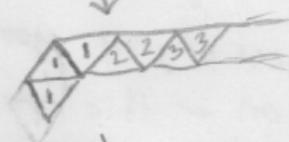
B
Coffman

Fold!



You should
get this!

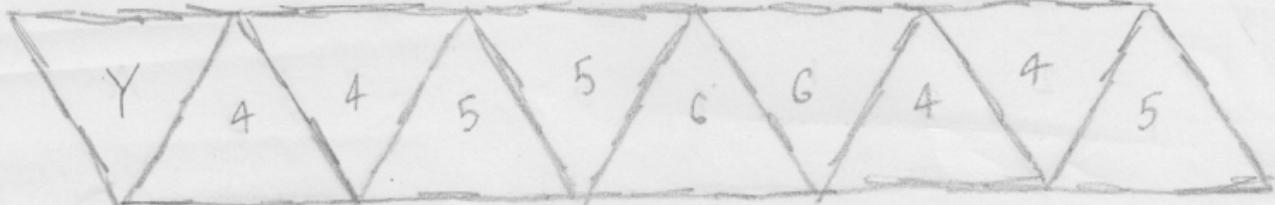
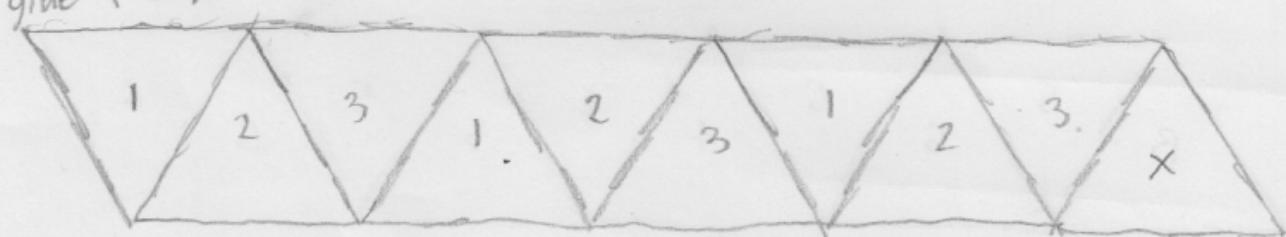
Then!
fold together
2 and 2



2 and 2

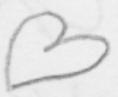


fold in
the end,
tuck Y over X,
and
glue Y to X!



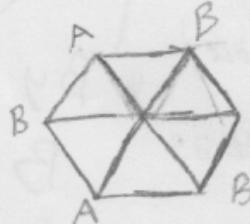
If you want to, color your flexagon faces!

Now, how do we use this???.??.?.



By

B
Cortman



Fold A corners
DOWN
Fold B corners
UP



Now, open up
the middle!

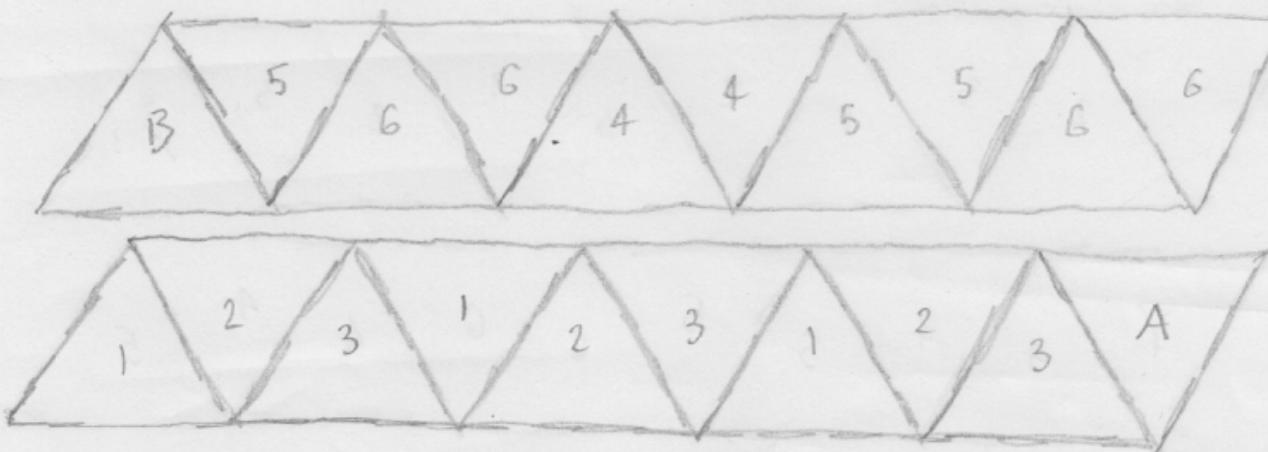
↑!
Gasp..!
A NEW FACE!

N.B.: This may not
work for all folds!
If it doesn't work, unfold,
and fold B-down, A-up
instead.

You can just keep flexing!

I hope you enjoy your new
hexaflexagon — this one is more
properly called a **HEXAHEXA FLEXAGON**
because there are six different faces contained within!

You can also make trihexaflexagons, or even dodecahexaflexagons.
(this submitter has made an icosikaitetrahexaflexagon, which is theoretically
possible but physically daunting)



Deconstructing the Egg-Sperm Narrative

by Aaron Neiman

Note: This post is based entirely on an article titled *The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles* by Emily Martin, which first appeared in the journal *Signs* in Spring of 1991 (Vol. 16, No. 3). All references made in the post are cited in the article, and can be read there. This post contains language that may be perceived as cissexist. However, The attribution of sperm to men and eggs to women, while deeply problematic, is used to illustrate a point about traditional "male/female" roles as they relate to Western biomedicine.

Recently, in my Cultural Anthropology class, we read a radical feminist analysis of the human fertilization process (link to article above). In it, the author cites examples from popular medical textbooks (the piece was written in 1991, but these textbooks are still widely used today) of the kind of rhetoric surrounding the reproductive acts of the male and female bodies. She points to several examples in which the sperm is described as heroically "swimming" toward the egg, while during menstruation the egg simply "floats" or disintegrates or dies. Martin goes on to confront the language used regarding the "waste" of menstruation, as Western (certainly American, especially) views menstruation as a reminder of a woman's failure to get pregnant. This is used to describe the 400-500 eggs that a woman [sic] will "waste" in her reproductive lifetime, compared to the 2 trillion sperm that will be used by a man [sic] for non-reproductive reasons.

But the crux of Martin's argument deals with the actual act of fertilization. She cites the same textbooks as they describe the damsel-in-distress sperm/egg narrative with which most westerners are familiar: the sperm valiantly braves the horrors of the vagina and fallopian tubes to reach the egg, and then forces itself inside. Martin criticizes this on two fronts: first, it is essentially a rape/heterosexist narrative, in which the invading sperm competes with others to claim its biological prize in a hostile environment. This, she argues, mirrors normative behaviors that reflect rape culture and the sexual expectations of men and women.

Second, she addresses the fact that the latest scientific research does not actually support this narrative. She cites a biophysics study from Johns Hopkins University, which sought to analyze the mechanics of a sperm flagella. Often, we picture the sperm's tail muscling its way up, while the egg waits to be fertilized passively. In fact, the research suggests a much different relationship between the gametes. While it is true that the sperm do journey and race one another, the study revealed that the tail is actually 10 times more efficient at moving the sperm laterally than it is propelling it forward. This means that once the sperm reaches the membrane, it is the egg that must take the active role in keeping it from swimming away. For some time, it was thought that the egg had a defensive barrier around it and that the sperm, as the invader, was biologically equipped to dig through or dissolve it. Again, this proves not to be the case, as it is the egg's own properties that guide the sperm to the nucleus so that the DNA may interact.



Martin attributes this discrepancy to Western biomedicine being influenced by misogynist ideals. To give the egg cell an active role is to radically change human reproduction as we understand it, and to change the narrative of the sperm, the male, the man, as the intruder, the penetrator, and the hero swimming to save his waiting counterpart.

Finally, Martin offers a critique of what limited literature does attribute the biomedically accurate traits to the human egg. For, when the egg is given power, it is described with violent rhetoric, as attacking or being hostile towards the sperm. Just as a woman with any power is usually accompanied by the "bitch" narrative, so too is the egg when it forfeits its passive role and gains biomedical power.

This critique provides an interesting look at how biological "facts" are not independent of cultural ideals, and how in fact the association of sperm with men and eggs with women is so deeply engrained as to permeate the way we explain fertilization in medical texts.

The Omen · Vol. 40, #1
A Not-Yet-Permanent Damage
Zilong Wang

Looking through the courses I've taken over the past few years, suddenly, I feel a deep worry. It is as if something is missing, but I couldn't locate the source. But, well, what could go wrong? Indeed, I've learned so much from diverse disciplines, in politics, economics, history, philosophy, logic, law, anthropology, biology, geology, and physics.

Until these words in Darwin's autobiography reminded me of what is missing:

"Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds ... gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music ..."

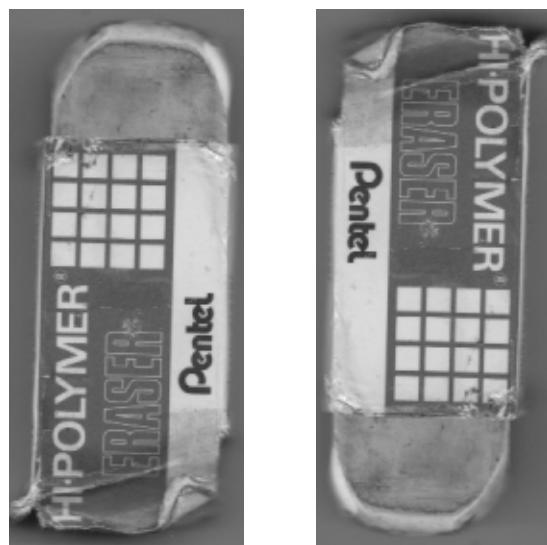
"My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive ... If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

How painfully and honestly described! Darwin's confession hit me hard. I finally realized what was missing in my course portfolio — I have confined my study exclusively to the "rational and analytical" departments of Western thinking, and have not taken any course in arts and humanities. No painting, sculpture, film, or photography; no literature, poetry, music, theater, or dance; none of the artistic expression of human experience. What a glaring hole! How stupid of me to not notice it until the last semester of college! And, how did this happen?

As I traced back in memory, I recalled the condition under which I chose my courses. It arose out of necessity, out of an urge to catch

up. I came to the United States to learn the "secret" of the West's success — its material achievement over the past three centuries. What forces propelled the advances of the industrial, imperial machines all over the globe? What Logic continues to shape the landscape of the 21st century?

Driven by these questions, I started out by studying politics and economics, thinking that by following money and power, I would reach the roots of the Western success. But, soon I realized that political and economic theories and events are merely the surface phenomena of more fundamental and metaphysical belief systems. So I turned my attention to history, philosophy, logic, and in particular, the philosophy of science. I was trying to make up for the lost time between East and West, traditional and modern.



Busy decoding the gene of scientific materialism, positivism and capitalism, I allowed myself no leisure to dwell in the luxury of reading poetry, critiquing novels, playing with mud (sculpture), or playing with paint (painting). John Adams summed it up for me:

"I must study politics and war, that our sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. Our sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain."

I thought of it as a reasonable trade-off, if not a willing sacrifice. And it would be fine if the study of "politics and war" has the same ethical and spiritual benefit of poetry and music. However, just as Darwin lamented his loss of "higher tastes" and its impact on his happiness and morality, I regret to report similar "atrophy" experienced first-hand.

By the third year of college, I have successfully trained my brain to become an analytical powerhouse, a reasoning machine that carries out deductive, logical, linear, scientific calculations, at lightening speed – too fast for my soul to follow. The brain flew on auto-pilot, grabbing anything within its reach for analysis, day and night. I can't stop, can't sleep, and can't see the meaning of all this. It's as if a strange parasite of "rationality" has taken over my brain, siphoning off the vital life energy and humanness. It almost drove me into a depression.

All these doctrines seem to derive so naturally from a few innocent assumptions. But they have produced such horrifying sufferings throughout the world that they are just too ugly to be true.

After having spent three years, working hard to acquire an understanding of the dominant system, it is not easy to come to term with its ugliness. On one hand, I have (partially) succeeded at discovering the underlying system that brought the West to world dominance. On the other hand, I have realized that this system is an unsustainable and oppressive one. It is destroying the very foundation on which it exists. All the while, China and other developing countries have been trying their best to copy the Western model, fostering the same mentality, exacerbating the problem.



I did acknowledge that along the line of scientific materialism, there is endless potential for accumulating knowledge. However, the principle of the accumulation is the same. It's like driving through an infinite dessert – you know there's a long way to go, but the scenery is the same. What's more, knowledge is not wisdom; facts are not well-being. I asked myself: is this the limit of human capacity? Are we condemned to driving for eternity on this dessert highway? Can I break out of the box of Reason, and can I find wisdom and truth beyond?

I was also struggling with doctrines like "there is no intrinsic value other than economic value," or "there is no truth beyond scientific knowledge (never mind that scientific knowledge is nothing but not-yet-falsified hypothesis)," or "the individualistic pursuit of self-interests would solve all of society's problems, including poverty, pollution and war."

After a period of internal struggle, I finally let go. I accepted the bankruptcy of a system that I have tried so hard to understand. Through meditation, Buddhism and other Chinese classics, I have slowly reclaimed some humanity and sanity. It has brought back much of what is truly precious and worth living for.

I came to see that the modern industrial society also needs to embark on a journey of "redemption" and reorientation. The society as a whole might not yet be at the tipping point. But each of us can start to change. Through self-healing, we can heal the world. Read a poem. Plant a tree. It's a long journey to recovery, but the good news is: the damage is not permanent. Not yet.

DRUNKEN GENDER ESSAY

B Corfman

Okay, I am going to be typing bullshit here. I can clean it up later. Basically, we have a problem. Society views gender as this...thing. It's connected to sex, right? We have two sexes, and two genders, and you know, maybe some person thinks their gender aligns with the sex that they aren't. And that's cool.

I don't think that's not cool or anything, but I think we're excluding people in this whole scenario here. Now think for a second, let's assume the whole gender and sex being parallel thing is true (because, gender being a social construct, it is since we think it is). Okay. So what the fuck about people with XXY chromosomes? This is a thing, it exists, and it's not as uncommon as you think.

Okay, so we go with what they look like, right?

Well, what about really effeminate men, or really masculine women? Are you calling butches men? Because I am pretty sure they will object rather strongly to that bullshit.

So that doesn't really work. Well, what about genitalia? So guys are people with dicks and women are people with vaginas (and possibly breasts). Testes versus ovaries, etc.

Oh, but then, you know, intersex people. So then we get this thing where it's like, "WELL. I think this baby's penis is really small and they have what looks like a vaginal opening so let's cut this sucker down to size and give 'er hormones for the rest of her life. Also if you notice my totally subtle use of female pronouns there"

And this is all because we treat gender and sex as parallels.

Yes – it's not because we think of sex as being binary. It's because we took sex – then took the CULTURAL concepts of sex, ie gender – and went, THERE ARE TWO OF THESE BECAUSE I SAID SO.

Then we retroactively applied the social construct to biology, and used majority rule to back it up. And growing up in this, without a real sense of how anything could ever be different, we all believe it. Even

me.

YEAH EVEN ME BECAUSE WE'RE ALL FUCKING BIASED ASSHOLES.

Ahem.

Okay, so, we know that sex is not a binary thing. We can pull examples from all over the animal kingdom (oh ho, but we are not animals but special humans with magical separation powers from the laws of the universe! Except fuck that bullshit, because I just got done explaining that we have PLENTY of examples of people without a 'traditional' sex. It's like 1 in 12 or something way more ridiculous than you'd want to admit, when you tally together everything 'abnormal,' whatever the fuck abnormal means). So if sex isn't binary, and you all are so attached to the idea of gender as a parallel to sex, there's no reason to suggest that there are two genders.

In fact, I could argue there are as many genders as there are variations in body shape. That is to say: gender is entirely individual. And the way it is expressed is even more individual.

The only thing making a man a man is him saying he's a man. The only thing making a woman a woman is the same (well, that she calls herself a woman – if he called himself a man he would be a man, duh). We have the cultural weight of 'if you generally conform more to one stereotype than the other, you are that', which pushes and impresses upon people enough that you get the vast majority of people very attached to the gender of either male or female, depending on how pronouncedly impregnator or impregnatee their genitalia is. And, individually, this is okay. I say it's wonderful that people like the things they do, and we should allow them to like and enjoy these things, and not judge them for it.

However, it is important to recognize that on a massive scale, this fucking sucks. We have these rigidly defined ideas of men and women, and if you're perceived as one or the other, it's the most horrible crime to do something not attributable to your assigned gender (well – to an extent. Girls who are cute but also act masculine are okay, because it's understandable that a woman would want to be like a man. After all, they are better).



Let's Bring Pogs Back!

Jonathan Gardner

As I sit here in the Omen office at going on 1:30am putting the finishing touches on this fine issue for you folks, I've come to realize something: Pogs are really cool. What are Pogs, you ask? They're those circular things on the previous page and scattered throughout this section (courtesy of our section editor). From what I understand, they were sort of a popular thing in the 90s, but I never heard of them until just this past year, and after playing a game with them I'm kind of enamored. You collect them like Pokemon cards, but the game associated with them is much more heartbreak, because you can lose them. So here's how it works: you and your buddies all contribute a number of Pogs to a big ol' stack of Pogs that are face down. Then someone throws the Smasher Pog (what a cool name, amiright?) onto the top of the stack, and whatever Pogs are face up are theirs for the taking. The Pogs that are face down

go back into the stack, and the game repeats until there aren't any left. If you've grown attached to Chun Li's contemptuous glare or Washington's wise, fatherly expression, then too bad, because your asshole friend just stole them from you! It's like if you lost your holographic Charizard (don't lie, I know you were super attached to that thing) because of a coin flip or some shit.

So here's my proposal, people of Hampshire: let's form a Pog-playing community. This is a game that can unite students across boundaries; I can feel it in my bones.

Actually I just needed to write about something to take up space. But if you *are* interested in Pogs now, we have a bunch in the Omen office, so you should come to Omen layout sometime and we can play the shit out of them together.



The Omen: Just in case